

# PLASTIC PALLET-MAKER FINDS INTERNATIONAL BUYERS

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For almost 25 years, Jeco Plastic Products, Inc., of Plainfield, Indiana, never imagined the success they could mold from international markets. Luckily, Craig Carson did. Three years ago he purchased Jeco Plastic Products, a manufacturer of 170 different sizes of plastic pallets, after years of international experience working for a large British firm in Europe. Carson bought the Indiana firm with the dream of turning the small domestic company into an internationally savvy exporter. Carson's dream is becoming a reality.

Although he faces numerous challenges common to small businesses, Carson has found international niches for his traditionally difficult-to-sell product. What is Jeco's advantage? "Our pallets are stronger and more durable than their wood and steel counterparts. They last forever and can handle both distributed or concentrated loads," explains Carson.

## PLAINFIELD COMES TO PARIS

After first finding buyers in the Canadian and Mexican markets, Jeco Plastic Products quickly shifted its focus to Europe. The new focus meant changes in their product line to include metric sizes and investments of time and travel. Carson and Richard Jefferies, President of Jeco Europe, discovered a knowledgeable ally in each of their targeted markets, who helped them identify buyers and bypass all potential roadblocks. These well-connected export facilitators are members of the U.S. Commercial Service.

Carson was initially hesitant to work with a government agency, but Mark Cooper, the Director of the Indianapolis Export Assistance Center, convinced him to give the U.S. Commercial Service a try. The result? Carson wouldn't think of entering a new overseas market without guidance from the Commercial Service. "The

Commercial Service staff overseas consists of skilled, professional country nationals, who speak the language and bring pertinent information to the table from their years working inside the industries in which I am interested," Carson said.

In his most recent venture into the French market, Carson worked with Stephanie Pencole of the Commercial Service in Paris to identify and meet with potential buyers. "Stephanie not only served as a translator, but was skilled enough to lead the negotiations with the French buyers. I wouldn't even trust some of my own people to do that, but Stephanie was a valuable asset for us."

Carson cautions that the Commercial Service cannot replace his own investment of time and travel, but after gaining some initial background knowledge of the market, he thinks that the Commercial Service should be a small company's next stop. "Small businesses have large barriers to overcome in entering international markets, but they can do it with Commercial Service help. There is no way my company would have the potential sales volume we do without that help."

Carson points out that exporting takes patience. He reminds other small businesses that the international sales process is often much longer than the domestic sales process, but that it's worth the wait. Carson expects his efforts in France to pay off soon and Stephanie and the Commercial Service will be there when they do. When it comes to export success, Jeco Plastic Products, Inc. intends to keep piling it on. ■



Photo courtesy of Jeco Plastic Products, LLC

Two Jeco Plastic Products, the smooth-top pallet for general use and the ribbed top for continuous feed press. Pallets are convenient for use in the automotive, printing and aviation industries.